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ABSTRACT

In the first part of this document, several definitions of communication are presented, and some of the various concepts or theories of communication are introduced. The authors then review some of the barriers that tend to impede effective communication, such as social-psychological and sociological barriers. Next, they examine those factors that may facilitate effective communication, such as those found in the network component and those in the message component of communication. Suggestions are also made for effective communication within the college or university. A final chapter considers the implication of effective communication for administrators. (Author/DN)

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EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATIONS AND AN ACCOUNTABLE ADMINISTRATIVE PROCESS

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INTRODUCTION

Educational administration has not paralleled industrial and business management; however, it has become increasingly clear that modern technology will change profoundly the way in which schools are to be administered. Use of computers for scheduling classes, advanced techniques for planning and control, technological advances in media, mechanical and automated laboratory equipment are portend significant changes in how schools are being operated.

Although scientific administration has generally been considered to be a twentieth century phenomenon, this is not exactly true. As early as the third century B. C. in China, Han Fei Tzu established a set of management principles that were a synthesis of principles of laws, methods and authority. He attempted to build an analogue of governmental rules and regulations and apply that analogue to management terminology.[1]

The essential ingredient in Han Fei Tzu's approach to management was that of systematic control through a set of clearly defined rules. "The intelligent ruler unifies measures and weights, sets up different standards, and steadfastly maintains them; then, his decrees are promulgated and the

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[1]Donald V. Etz, "The First Management Consultant," Management Review, LIII (September, 1965).

people follow them. Laws are the models for the empire and the representative standards for all affairs ..."[2]

Also, some of Han Fei Tzu's concepts regarding organizational structure were comparable to the modern organizational structure of General Motors. That is, the principle of decentralization was applied although central authority was maintained.[3]

In terms of Han Fei Tzu's principles, "When a subject makes claims, the ruler gives him work according to what he has claimed but holds him wholly responsible for accomplishment corresponding to this work. When the accomplishment corresponds to the work, and the work corresponds to what the man claimed he could do, he is rewarded."[4]

One can easily recognize the embryo of Max Weber's bureaucratic theory and the significance of effective communication in Han Fei Tzu's above mentioned philosophy. Moreover, certainly the seeds of scientific methodology were present in the approaches to management espoused by Han Fei Tzu. In short, systematic observations were made, records were kept, and replications tested the efficacy of the methods. and the necessity of establishing and maintaining effective communication is now quite evident to professionals and laymen alike.

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[2] Ibid.

[3] Alfred Sloan, My Years with General Motors (New York: Doubleday and Company, 1964).

[4] Etz, op. cit.

Subsequently, this paper shall deal with communication. The first part shall deal with concepts in communication; the second part shall deal with barriers which tend to impede effective communication; the third part shall present factors which facilitate optimum communication; the fourth part shall present some implication of effective communication for education administrators and concluding remarks.

For the sake of clarification, several definitions of communication shall be presented. These are:

> Communication is the exchange of information and the transmission of meaning. It is the very essence of social system or an organization.[5]

> Communication is conceived as fundamentally an interactive, interrelational concept; its essential focus is not on the properties of single messages or single individuals, but on features characterizing the interaction of pairs or groups of actors, whatever the scope of research attention in a given instance.[6]

> Communication is a process by which a message is transmitted over a channel from a source to a receiver. Encoding and decoding are important parts of the communication process, though not always treated apart from the source and receiver. The concept of a communication network (or net) is a useful one for clarification of the structure of communication relationships....[7]

> Communication is the transfer of ideas from one mind to another. All communication is essentially the transmission and reception of ideas.
>
> From Baltimore Bulletin of Education
> Vol. XXXI, No. 1, October, 1953.

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[5]Daniel Katz and Robert L. Kohn, The Social Psychology of Organization (New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1966).

[6]John H. Weakland, "Communication and Behavior - An Introduction," American Behavior Scientist, 10: 1 - 4 (April, 1967).

[7]Leslie Warren Ross,"Communication in College Administration," (Microfilmed Doctoral Dissertation, University of Michigan, 1961).

The review of literature shows that there is a diversity of meanings but that there is a great deal of similarity in what each definition is saying. For example, expressly implied in the three above mentioned definitions, and most deserving of special interest emphasis, is the idea that communication is a transitive, dynamic phenomenon of interaction between persons, which involves the passage of some kind of information between them, the notion of information being very broadly defined.

As far as theoretical studies are concerned, Ross[8] writes:

> There are several areas of human communication on which researchers have concentrated. These areas may be represented in seven major categories, although (a) the categories are not always mutually exclusive, and (b) each has a number of sub-fields. The categories are:
>
> (1) Communication engineering
> (2) Mass communication
> (3) Communication skills
> (4) Mathematical and statistical studies of communication
> (5) Linguistic-semantic aspects of communication
> (6) Information theory
> (7) Administration communication

All seven theories have made definite impacts upon the total or overall communicational philosophy. However, the content of this paper shall be concerned with administrative communication in education.

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[8] Ibid.

CHAPTER 1

Concepts in Communication

In order for one to truly comprehend the difficulty that is inherent in the communication process, one has to be acquainted with the various concepts or theories of communication. Hence, some of these concepts or theories are:

Culbertson[9] and his co-authors describe and explain some of the most appropriate concepts for communication in the following manner:

> The purpose shapes the communication process and is the benchmark against which effectiveness must be measured. The purposes of communications have different dimensions and can be classified into various categories. For example, is there a single purpose in the communication, or are there multiple purposes?
>
> The communicator is the person who transmits meaning. How the communicators' listeners perceive him is crucial in determining communication effects.

It is because of this fact that Ross[10] writes: "In the case of social psychology, considerable research has been done on group processes, including leadership, authority, and many other aspects of group behavior. Some of the work has focused on communication specifically, or has treated communication as an important element in the functioning of groups. Much of this research may be extended to apply to the kinds of groups encountered in the administration of colleges and universities."

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[9] Jack Culbertson, Paul B. Jacobson, and Theodore L. Reller, Administrative Relationships, A Casebook (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1960).

[10] Ross, op. cit.

> Culbertson continues, the communication channels follow patterns of formal and/or informal relationships, and through them messages are transmitted. Communication channels can be classified in various ways. Upward channels, for example, are those that link persons in lower organizational levels to persons in higher organizational levels. Upward, downward, and horizontal channels can all be classified as relatively open or relatively closed; as relatively short or relatively extended. A distinction can also be made between direct and indirect channels. Thus, in face-to-face communication, the channel is direct. However, when a message is sent to a person through a second person, the channel is indirect.
>
> The communication media are usually classified as either oral or written.
>
> The communicatee is the person for whom the content is designed.

Furthermore, Ross[11] mentions several other concepts that are significant in understanding the intricacies involved in the communicational process in administration. These concepts are:

> Information generally refers to that which is communicated. Feedback, entropy, and noise are factors which affect the success of communication, often in subtle ways, in nearly all circumstances. Redundancy refers to certain qualities of superfluity in messages designed to help increase the chances of understanding on the part of the receiver.
>
> Feedback refers essentially to the relaying back into a system or organism information or data resulting from a previous action of the system or organism, so that future actions may be intelligently modified in the light of changing conditions.
>
> ...entropy, or increasing disorder, is a valuable insight for communications to possess. The concept suggests that even the most perfect drafting of a communication will in some way be misinterpreted by someone, and that such misinterpretation is normal and inevitable.

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[11] Ross, Ibid.

> Noise is used to describe any kind of disturbance that affects the fidelity of a communication.
>
> An encoder and a decoder is the process of converting thought patterns into language symbols and the process of reconverting the symbols into thought patterns.

One can readily ascertain the reason why Ross emphasizes the importance of the receiver of a piece of communication; he writes...the receiver is an indispensable element in the communication process because communication must find an object in order properly to be called communication at all.

> Ross continues, networks refer to the patterns or webs of communication relationships that have been established to accomplish a certain purpose.
>
> Information theory is concerned with what it is that is communicated, not from the standpoint of meaning or message content, but mainly with the statistical probability of overcoming error potentialities so as to get a message through.

Moreover, Culbertson[12] states that there are basically the following relevant communicational processes: One-way oral communication, two-person communication, small-group communication, organizational communication, and written communication. He explains and elaborates on each of these processes as follows:

> In one-way communication, immediate feedback is at a minimum. Written communication is inevitably one-way, and the visual senses receive its messages. Whereas, oral one-way communication is highly dependent upon the aural senses, although the visual senses also aid in the reception.
>
> The important characteristics of one-way communication are:
>
> (1) Getting and maintaining the attention of the communicatees;
> (2) Getting the understanding of the communicatees;
> (3) Getting the desired action or reaction.

---

[12]Culbertson, Jacobson, Reller, op. cit.

> The significance of one-way communication process is crystalized by this statement by Tead: the necessary process of communication as it relates to new policy questions has to be broken down into personal and face-to-face procedure of dealings with and in small groups. This requirement cannot be ignored if the intention is to go beyond telling or announcing, shared, and willing convictions. There is no substitute for this face-to-face confrontation in the communication of important new ideas.

This very point is supported and emphasized in Campbell, Cunningham and McPhee's book, The Organization and Control of American Schools.[13]

Culbertson continues,

> Two-person communication occurs between an administrator and another person and it may be formally planned or it may arise spontaneously. Stated in another manner, two-way communication involves listening as well as speaking or writing. It is important to invite opinions and to hear what is said. It is essential to hear complaints, because this is a means of keeping informed about current problems that are probably being discussed in the informal channels of communication.... ...group communication is somewhat more complex than it is in two-way communication because more points of view are represented.

As a consequence of the complexity inherent in group communication, the communicator must depend on feedback to determine the extent of comprehension of his message by the communicatee. Feedback refers essentially to the relaying back into a system or organism information or data resulting from a previous action of the system or organism, so that future actions may be intelligently modified in light of changing conditions. This is one of the central concepts in cybernetics.

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[13]Ronald F. Campbell, Luvern L. Cunningham and Roderick F. McPhee, The Organization and Control of American Schools, (Columbus, Ohio: Charles E. Merrill Publishing Company, 1965).

The term cybernetics has come to denote that discipline associated with the investigation of communication and control. Although the term cybernetics as used by Norbert Wiener has been associated primarily with the physical system of engineering and physics, the original usage by Ampere was a reference to government. Cybernetics is defined by Wiener as "The science of control and communication...."[14] In short, the essence, as Wiener sees it, of cybernetics is internal communication and control. Wiener comments that "the widespread use of cybernetics theory has become commonplace in industry."[15]

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[14]Michael J. Deutch, "The Application of Cybernetics to the Profession and Scientific Operations of the U. S. Government," Third International Congress on Cybernetics, Namur Association (Association Internationale de Cybernetique, 1965).

[15]Norbert Wiener, Cybernetics (New York: Doubleday and Company, 1948).

CHAPTER 2

Impedement Barriers to Effective Communication

Having reviewed some definitions of communication and some of the significant concepts from which effective communication is derived, this chapter shall be concerned with reviewing barriers that tend to impede effective communication. Communication barriers may appear in many forms but their end results are the same - obstruction of effective communication.

Culbertson, Jacobson and Reller[16] state the following in reference to communication barriers:

> ...those perceptions about the personality and positions of the communicator, perceptions about the words and other symbols that carry the content, and perceptions influenced by the needs, expectations, and personality patterns of the communicatee.
>
> ...nonverbal symbols, physical appearance, voice tone, dress, are communication barriers that the communicator must be concerned about when attempting to communicate a message.

In regards to how words' meanings may tend to be barriers to good communication, Ruesh and Kees state that "...there is a deepening regard for problems of meaning and concern with the individualistic and idiosyncratic attributes of words as opposed to their dictionary definitions." This is true when words, through use, are often taken for granted in that the listener assumes that the meaning he associates with a word is the same as that held by a communicator; keeping this point in mind, it may be seen where habitually taking the

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[16]Culbertson, Jacobson and Reller, op. cit.

[17]Jurgen Ruesch and Weldon Kees, Non-Verbal Communication (Berkeley: The University of California Press, 1956).

meanings of words for granted frequently leads to inaccurate meanings and false assumptions. In essence, words are not things, but, rather, they stand for things and meanings. Therefore, communication is not just exchanging words, but involves an attempted exchange of unique meanings associated with words.

Culbertson, Jacobson and Reller continue:

> ...perceptions that personnel have about the motives of the administrator are also extremely important in determining meaning and eliminating communication interference.
>
> ...perceptions about the personality and position of the communicator, perceptions about the words and other symbols that carry the content help to facilitate effective communication but just as important are the needs, values, and predispositions of the communicatee.

Ross[18] lists the following as barriers to administrative communication:

> (1) Human behavior is very unpredictable.
>
> (2) Administrative decisions are made on the basis of a mosaic of relevant communication. The abundance of communication impinging on an administrator forces him to select and use only that which he feels really relevant.
>
> (3) Personality differences may cause deviant communicative behavior. Although short, direct, and efficient communication channels may be prescribed on the organizational chart, Mr. A. may choose to avoid Mr. B. at all costs simply because he doesn't like him.
>
> (4) A multitude of factors are necessary for optimum communication, but time does not usually permit adequate treatment of all of them. A fine discretion is required in communication effort because so many elements are consequential; the medium chosen is very important, message content has a primary influence on communication success, and the time chosen for communicating may of itself negate any positive results that would have otherwise been obtained.

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[18]Ross, op. cit.

(5) The personal elements in communication are crucial to its success, but they are also relatively intractable. The intensely individual aspects of encoding and decoding, which involve such things as education, personal experience, intellectual ability, and prior familiarity with the subject, are extremely difficult to anticipate, control, or modify.

(6) Organizational structure often works against good communication. Many impediments to optimum communication may be traced to organizational defects. For example, X and Y may have a regular need to communicate, but may be expressly prohibited from doing so.

(7) Mechanical barriers such as imprecise channelization, too much noise (interference), and inavailability of preferred media.

(8) Content barriers such as various errors of omission and commission in the phrasing of messages, such as vagueness, inaccuracy, and insufficiency of information.

In the same light, Lane, Corwin and Monahan[19] divide the communication barrier into two major categories: (1) Social Psychological Barriers and (2) Sociological Barriers. Specifically they are:

A. Social-Psychological Barriers

1. Lack of attention
2. Disinterest
3. Selective attention
4. Selective exposure and recall
5. Effects
6. Misinterpretation
7. Rigidity of attitudes

B. Sociological Barriers

1. Age
2. Sex
3. Political affiliation
4. Religion
5. Social class perspective
6. Occupation
7. Official rank

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[19]Willard R. Lane, Ronald G. Corwin and William G. Monahan, Foundations of Educational Administration: A Behavioral Analysis (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1967).

CHAPTER 3

Factors Which May Facilitate Effective Communication

Keeping this information in Chapter Three in mind, one is aware of the fact that many of the problematic areas in effective communication shall be tormentors of students, faculty, administrators and the laymen for a long, long time to come because of the unpredictable human behavior component. As paradoxical as it may sound, the above statement was written to convey the sentiment that all was lost in terms of effective communication. On the contrary, its only purpose is to bring to the fore-front the fact that there are intricate problems within the complex realm of communication and that communicators and communicatees must join forces and unite in a sincere effort to keep the barriers to effective communication at an extremely low level; in this regard, Ross[20] has kept the light of hope burning with his presentation of "characteristics of effective administrative communication." He states:

> They may be broadly classified into two categories, those having to do with (a) the network component of communication and (b) the message component.
>
> Network component - Desirable features are:
>
> Directness
> Promptness
> Proper distribution of message
> Automatic transmission and reception where possible
> Comprehensive system for classifying communications.

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[20]Ross, op. cit.

Message component - ...the list of desirable properties of messages is...:

Clarity
Brevity
Consistency
Interesting Style
Emotional appeal
Tact and considerations
Accuracy and relevancy

Ross[21] also lists the subsequent suggestions as being conducive to effective or optimum communication in colleges and universities:

(1) All segments of the college or university community should feel that they have adequate and sensitive communication channels, in and out, by which to accomplish their assigned tasks.

(2) The best results are achieved when a systematic attack is made on the communication problem, in the form of a continuing "communication program" of some kind. The program should consist of three steps:

(a) An initial intensive examination of the entire communications framework.

(b) Implementation of corrective action.

(c) Continuing audit of communication practices in the institution. This may be facilitated in two ways, first, by making everyone "communications conscious" through increased emphasis on good communication procedures, and secondly, by appointing a communication - co-ordinator whose part-time responsibility it is to see that communication flows smoothly and efficiently.

(3) Media should be organized so that communications

(a) move quickly,

(b) are routed through as few intermediate centers as possible,

(c) are brief, yet clear and concise,

(d) are transmitted over dual media when particular emphasis or retention is desired, and

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[21] Ross, Ibid.

(e) move through automatically prescribed channels in most cases.

(4) Communication activities should be organized so as to be quickly adaptable to changing conditions. The inevitability of change must be recognized and provided for. Channels must remain particularly clear for prompt and accurate feedback.

(5) Due recognition should be given the special problems inherent in administration-faculty and administration-student communication. Specific techniques should be worked out on individual campuses to make allowances for particular personalities and organizational peculiarities.

A discussion of factors which may facilitate effective communication is not complete without mentioning the factor of timing. The concept of timing involves frequent and continuous association between communicator and communicatee, promptness of action in dealing with administrative matters, ability to gain the confidence of the communicatee and the consideration of other's advice in arriving at the optimum decision as quickly as possible.

CHAPTER 4

Implications of Effective Communication to Administrators

Implicit in most of the literature on administration communication are three significant assumptions: (a) that communication is the life-blood of administration, (b) that communication processed in an organization can be located, analyzed and improved and (c) that administrators have control over a number of factors in administrative communication. This statement is supported or substantiated by the material in Chapters One, Two, and Three of this paper.

Moreover, if one concurs with Campbell and Gregg[22] that "communication is the ebb and flow of feelings and ideas among people. It is reading, listening, speaking, writing, depicting. It is comprehending and making comprehensible that which one wishes to communicate. It is the desire to make a message clear to others."

Then, with the above thoughts in mind, it would be appropriate to discuss the import of communication to administration. Stated differently, how can the administrator play an effective role in two-person communication in the face of limitations in time, the pressures of the situation in which he works, the imperfections of human personality, the shortcomings of communication symbols, and the timing factor? A basic consideration in meeting his task is his ability to be a good listener.

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[22]Ronald Campbell and Russell Gregg, Administrative Behavior in Education (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1957).

Thus, one realizes the significance of an expression of genuine interest in the person communicating with the administrator by the administration. This essential point cannot be over-emphasized. If the administrator is busy, gruff, harsh, discourteous, impatient or permits any of the barriers mentioned in Chapter Two to become involved in the communicational process, this will be communicated and the net result will be ineffective communication. Also, a permissive atmosphere in which personnel can express their feelings and have them accepted is also important.

Moreover, in addition to the goal of understanding and minimizing the factors that inhibit communication, the administrator has a second task: Namely, to channel the communicational process toward certain ends and within certain time limits; however, at every step the administrator should try to avoid communitive behavior that might seem to question the integrity of colleagues. Rather, he should focus on ideas, problems, and their solutions.

In short, the major import for administrators, in terms of communication, seems to be that administrators should endeavor to establish and maintain optimum conditions which are conducive to optimum or effective communication for all concerned. Thus, the administrator can enjoy a great deal of success in accomplishing this endeavor by working assiduously to eliminate the barriers to effective communication and by employing techniques that are conducive to effective communication.

In conclusion, the overwhelming importance of communication in the total administrative realm is explicitly stated in the subsequent statement by Goodman:[23]

> ...the reaching of a decision is the core of administration. (1) The first step of rational decision-making is a clear comprehension of the purpose or goal to be served by the decision. (2) All possible facts, opinions, etc., are assembled. (3) Analysis and interpretation. (4) Formulation of alternatives. (5) Evaluation in effectiveness toward reaching the purpose or goal. (6) Selecting the particular alternative.

All of this occurs on three levels:

(1) Organizational purpose and over-all program and personnel policies.

(2) Specific objective and coordination of efforts of staff.

(3) Operational: Individual staff-members deciding on what is professionally and technically correct. But the most important part of this theory of Professor Campbell's is communication: "Communication is the process by which direction, information, ideas, explorations, and questions are transmitted from person to person or from group to group. When communication is adequate, the organizational purposes are likely to be commonly understood and the members will tend to act in a cooperative and coordinate manner toward the accomplishment of this purpose."

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[23]Paul Goodman, The Community of Scholars (New York: Random House, 1962).

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